Hero D.A.R.E. Officer

Richard Agundez Jr. was a hero to one El Cajon woman long before he helped bring a quick end to the violence at Granite Hills High School.

He saved Laura Mosier's life 13 years ago when he rounded up nine strangers to help him lift an overturned Ford Bronco off her.

'He is a real hero,' Mosier said. 'As soon as I heard about the shooting, I thought, 'Oh yeah,' he's probably right involved in it.' It didn't surprise me.'

Agundez, an El Cajon, California, police officer assigned to the Granite Hills campus, responded swiftly when the shooting started at 12:55pm, engaging in a brief running gun battle with a teen-ager armed with a shotgun and a handgun.

The 20-year veteran radioed for help and then chased down the gunman, identified as 18-year-old Jason Hoffman, a student who classmates said had not been seen on campus for some time. Agundez was named El Cajon's Officer of the Year last year.

'Agent Agundez is the hero of the day,' said Granite Hills Principal Georgette Torres. 'He certainly is our hero.'

Agundez joined the El Cajon Police Department in 1981, working in patrol and traffic. For five years, He was assigned to the department's SWAT team, and most recently had served as a D.A.R.E. officer.

By Dong-Phong Nguyen and Karen Kucher

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